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SUBJECT: D/NSA LTG LUTE AND D/SRSG ALEXANDER DISCUSSIONS ON
AFGHAN CHALLENGES AND ISAF-UNAMA DYNAMICS

Classified By: Ambassador William Wood for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

Summary

11. (C) Deputy SRSG Chris Alexander used an October 22 meeting with Deputy NSA LTG Lute to lay out a proposal for closer UNAMA-ISAF coordination on an overall counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan. He reported close coordination between the SRSG and COMISAF, but highlighted difficulties coordinating further up the NATO command chain due in part to the complications of NATO's chain and in part due to lack of UNAMA counterpart structures. Consistent with counterinsurgency doctrine "that gives primacy to political factors," UNAMA would welcome a revised mandate that would give it responsibility for coordinating international civil and military efforts. LTG Lute agreed with the need for better strategic coordination, but highlighted the complexity of NATO decision-making and the role of capitals. Alexander said UNAMA endorsed the idea of a Special Envoy working capitals as complement to the SRSG. He reiterated the need for a unified approach, preferably under a UNAMA umbrella, to governance and rule of law, designed to give President Karzai room to lead and develop a stronger team. Lauding the work of the PRTs to this point, Alexander argued that UNAMA would provide a more even and effective delivery platform in the long run. He highlighted the relationship between narcotics and the insurgency; UNAMA is concerned that narco-funded interests may affect the outcome of the 2009-2010 presidential and parliamentary elections. Alexander stated that the UNAMA position is that, while fully supporting efforts to reconcile individuals, UNAMA does not believe the time is right "morally or legally" for talks with the Taliban. LTG Lute and Alexander agreed on the need for a coordinated and firm international message to Pakistan. End Summary

12. (C) LTG Lute, accompanied by Counselor Eliot Cohen and Policy Planning Director David Gordon of State, and DASD Mitch Shivers of OSD met with Deputy SRSGs Chris Alexander and Bo Asplund on October 22 at the end of their two-day visit to Kabul. DCM Dell represented the Embassy. Senior Military Advisor to the SRSG Brigadier Sean Crane and UNAMA Political Affairs Officer Arabella Phillimore also

participated.

Enhanced Coordination and the UNAMA Mandate

13. (C) Deputy NSA LTG Lute and Deputy SRSG Alexander began their discussions by agreeing that the evolving Afghan situation requires a willingness to adapt. Alexander said UNAMA has been engaged in a period of reflection on next steps for the mission. The UN role has evolved from a champion of political development under Bonn to a coordination role, particularly on the development and governance fronts, under the Afghan Compact. Its mandate requires it to coordinate with ISAF, but there is a legitimate question about whether the UNAMA and ISAF are close enough together to allow for effective coordination. He noted that UNAMA's mandate will be up for renewal in March so "this is a good time to think it through." Alexander said the Bosnian model of an "Executive Authority HiRep with sovereignty" is obviously not appropriate for Afghanistan. UNAMA is looking for a mechanism that, "consistent with COIN doctrine, provides a strong political lead to a closely-coordinated and strategically-driven civilian-military COIN effort." He underlined that an effective effort must have an Afghan lead and strong, coordinated international support." Alexander proposed that UNAMA be given the mandate to bring the civilian and military efforts together, adding that "double-hatting" or even "triple-hatting" (to include the EU) at some level in the hierarchy would be useful. He noted that the coordination function he envisioned goes beyond the ISAF mandate, and that, in any case, ISAF does not have the necessary reach

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into the provinces. He highlighted that UNAMA currently has 17 offices and extends into critical provinces, including Badakhshan.

14. (C) Alexander explained there is regular communication and close coordination on the ground between COMISAF and the SRSG, reinforced by constant interaction at the deputy and working levels. But this does not address the problem of the disconnect between the civil-military dialogue in Kabul and the military decision-making that takes place further up the NATO command chain. UNAMA has the sense that ISAF serves essentially as Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum's "subcontractor," which limits the coordination potential on the ground. Brigadier Crane advocated more authority for operation decisions being devolved to ISAF in Kabul to increase military effectiveness and facilitate coordination.

SRSG and Special Envoy Responsibilities

15. (C) LTG Lute agreed there is need for better civilian-military coordination, but highlighted that JFC Brunssum is only one part of the NATO decision process. He underlined the importance of decisions taken at SHAPE, NATO HQ in Brussels, and in capitals. It was hard to see how one SRSG could span these institutions to bring about the coordination everyone agreed is the goal. Alexander agreed, adding that in September in New York there was increased support for the idea of a Special Envoy in addition to a SRSG. UNAMA's concern is unity of effort within the UN structure; special envoys usually report to the Political Department, while the SRSG falls within the Peacekeeping Operations Department. Separate lines of authority could lead to more problems than solutions. If there are to be two positions, this needs to be addressed. In response to LTG Lute's question, Alexander said both positions could be in the Peacekeeping Department, adding there would need to be a hierarchy. The Special Envoy would need to spend a significant time in Kabul to stay connected to the situation on the ground. LTG Lute suggested that the Special Envoy

might be given an office at NATO HQ to help address the lack of understanding within NATO of what is going on in Afghanistan beyond military operations. Questions in NATO about what the UN or other international organizations are doing are evidence of the lack of information getting to that system. Part of the special envoy's responsibility could be to address this problem. Alexander endorsed the idea.

UNAMA Ready to be the Platform for Governance Efforts

¶6. (C) Phillimore noted that the scheduled 2009 Presidential and 2010 parliamentary elections has both President Karzai and international players focusing on the need for the government to demonstrate that it can deliver. Alexander said that President Karzai is concerned that he is being micromanaged by the international community and has lost control of the process. UNAMA believes that what is needed at this point is for the international community to step back and provide adequate, unified support to Karzai and his team (the Policy Action Group; Popal, the new sub-national governance czar; and the Strategic Communications effort).

¶7. (C) Alexander highlighted the need for robust governance efforts in the provinces, adding that, in his view, the PRTs needed to evolve to become more nimble. He cited the civilian-led PRT Panjshir as the "next generation model." Asplund also underlined that need for better link-up between various actors at the local level, highlighting the UNAMA/CJTF-82 link in RC-E as exemplary. When LTG Lute endorsed the need for better military-UNAMA link, Alexander added that it would be important that ensure "that individual member states are subordinate to the arrangement." This, he said, would help develop a comprehensive approach to the "lack of trajectory on police training by the Europeans; absence of investment in governance; and slow start to rule

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of law efforts." He argued that UNAMA could, in the long run, provide "a more efficient platform" for these efforts, which by nature will be resource intense. Alexander acknowledged Karzai's concern with what he sees as the international community's bottoms-up approach to governance. Efforts to strengthen governance would include a commitment to professionalize and strengthen the line ministries and support the initiatives coming out of the Palace, specially Popal's efforts. The DCM noted that this was consistent with using the Provincial Development Plans as a vehicle for ensuring the ministries are listening to the provinces/districts and that the people, in turn, see them as responsive.

Counternarcotics: Urgent Need for "Comprehensive Approach"

¶8. (C) Alexander expressed concern over the consequences of a failure of the international community to develop a comprehensive approach to counter narcotics. He welcomed COMISAF's leadership in emphasizing the link to the counterinsurgency campaign. The failure of the international community to come up with an effective response has had the effect of alienating the Afghans and undermining their confidence both in the government and the international community. Asplund added that, with the international community advocating approaches "from here to there," Afghans feel caught in the middle, with no answer of their own. LTG Lute noted this was one more symptom of the lack of effective coordination. Phillimore warned that there is a real danger that an opposition resourced by narco-trafficking will be able to affect the outcome of the upcoming elections. Asked to suggest a strategy, Alexander underlined the importance of protecting and rewarding generously poppy-free provinces and bringing on board more. The government also must show it is willing and able to use law enforcement (even if ragged) to

prosecute high-profile targets. It is essential that the government show it can deliver.

UNAMA Position: It is not Time to Talk to the Taliban

¶9. (C) Alexander said he wanted to state that UNAMA does not think the time is right -- either legally or morally -- to talk to the Taliban. He added that he did not believe approaches by the Taliban were sincere or genuine. That said, UNAMA supports the reconciliation of individuals who, according to Alexander, are "essentially capitulating." It is useful to provide them with a dignified way to do this. UNAMA, which has been a strong supporter of a well-run PTS program, wants to continue working to make this happen.

¶10. (C) Alexander appealed for a strong and unified message to Pakistan, particularly on the issue of sanctuary. He and Asplund expressed concern that Pakistan was using "gestures" (they included participation in the Peace Jirga) to buy time and maneuvering room without making needed changes. LTG Lute agreed with the need for a unified international message which makes clear the linkages between safe havens in Pakistan and the security conditions in Afghanistan.

¶11. (U) LTG Lute's Office cleared on this message.
WOOD